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Investigative Fieldwork Report

**Investigating the Factors of Urban Change and Adaptation
in Moroccan Cities**

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This fieldwork to Morocco investigates the factors of change in the Moroccan urban landscape and the degrees of adaptability of different urban settings to these factors. The purpose of this study trip is to conduct an on-site qualitative investigation study for my doctoral research that investigates new models of adaptive urban development through the development and use of urban simulations tools for the Moroccan context. The use of more flexible and dynamic urban development design and policies adaptability and more diversification to the benefit of the practice of urban design; while keeping a degree of preservation of the social, cultural, and spatial characteristics peculiar to Moroccan urban settings.

In my doctoral research, it is anticipated that an algorithmic design model is a fitting contemporary solution that can simulate and offer a wide range of objective-based spatial solutions in such an urban context. This research aims to define how traditional ways of dwelling that were characterized by their spatial adaptability can be leveraged to be applied for urban design in contemporary ways of dwelling. This can be especially useful in the case of social housing and high-density planning, a feature that current practices of urbanism in the context of some Islamic emerging countries like Morocco is still so far lacking. Ultimately, the research aims to explore the possibilities of new models of urbanism that can evolve with growing human needs and allow for a malleable urban space.

As part of my current study about the defining factors of the urban form of Islamic cities, I conducted investigative fieldwork in the cities of Rabat and Salé in Morocco from August 13th to September 2nd. 2021. The purpose of this research activity was to collect first-hand information about the urban growth of urban tissues of old Islamic cities, and new towns of Morocco. In addition, I also conducted interviews with several professionals, scholars and researchers that specialize in the urban history of Morocco, urban planning, and social housing policies. Additionally, I also consulted with architects of the ministry of urbanism and habitat, and professionals of the Mohamed 6 polytechnic university at Benguerir.

By engaging in this activity, I could reach a better understanding of the relation between the current and historical socio-cultural factors, the environmental setting, the demographic and how they reflect on the urban change and transformation of different urban settings and typologies in Morocco. By analyzing the architectural survey findings and correlate them with the interviews to set up evaluation criteria that can assess the adaptability of urban settlements in the face of various constraints and other factors of change. I am currently

analysing the findings for policy and design recommendations that can bring about a development model that learns from the adaptability and resilience of traditional towns and applies learned lessons to nowadays context.

I conducted a field survey for a more hands-on observation of the medina urban typology. To establish a more detailed Idea about building typologies in the Medinas, I surveyed the Medina of Salé city to familiarize myself with the field that was subject to the previous research works. This survey was conducted while also focusing on the factors of change, growth, and deterioration of these urban tissues. It was also a convenient opportunity to focus on the defining aspects of the medina typology and gather photographic material for further study. These data help to better understand patterns of transformation through long periods in the face of demographic and environmental change. Assessing the current state of these urban tissues from a socio-spatial perspective was also part of this fieldwork. This implies studying how the urban space is practiced and socially produced through the application of a spatial analysis approach that considers factors of change and evolution of socio-spatial needs.



The bare walls of the Medina of Salé, August 2021

To investigate the factors of urban change, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with experts. I was able to gather data about the historical sites (traditional towns of Morocco), as well as 'new towns' (large scale development projects) to analyze the degrees of adaptability of these types of settlements in face of urban change. By conducting these interviews, I was could better understand the social, administrative, and economic factors that define the organization, growth, and adaptation of contemporary developments when compared to traditional ones.

This fieldwork was an important step in gathering documentation and primary data for refining and narrowing down the subject of my doctorate research. Indeed, discussing with various researchers that are knowledgeable about the topic of Islamic cities was highly beneficial and has allowed me to establish a stronger network that I could rely on in the future steps of my study. The research documentation and photographic material that I gathered, including references in the Arabic language as well as unpublished research thesis only available in Morocco are going to be the subject of further study in the weeks to come after my return to Japan.